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SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE VISITATION

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER,

Holden at LIVERPOOL,

ON SATURDAY, JULY 6TH. 1799,

BY THE REV. FRODSHAM HODSON, M. A.

FELLOW OF BRASEN NOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Published at his Lordship's Command.

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To
THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

WILLIAM,

BY DIVINE PERMISSION,
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER,
THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

PREACHED AT HIS APPOINTMENT,

AND

PUBLISHED AT HIS COMMAND,

IS INSCRIBED,

With the most profound respect and reverence,

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

Obliged and dutiful servant,

FRODSHAM HODSON.



THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP OF CHESTER

WILLIAM

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LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER,

THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

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WITH THE NAME OF THE BISHOP AND HIS DEEDS,

BY HIS LORDSHIP,

Obliged and devoted servant,

FRODOHAM HOBSON

I
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S E R M O N, &c.

EPHES. Chap. iv. Ver. 16.

— THE WHOLE BODY FITLY JOINED TOGETHER,
AND COMPACTED BY THAT WHICH EVERY JOINT
SUPPLIETH —

A WRITER, the graces of whose language have conferred on his labors in the cause of infidelity an importance greatly disproportioned to the weight of his authorities or to the general fairness of his reasoning, has endeavoured to depreciate the credibility of our religion by tracing its progress to the operation of human causes; and, as if fearful, perhaps conscious, that such harmless weapons, though wielded by his skilful hand, could not

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inflict

inflict the deadly blow, he has^a subjoined some sarcastic animadversions on the introduction of those gradations of rank, which are as essential to ecclesiastical as to civil order, which at once uphold and adorn our establishment, and by the disparagement therefore of which, he, I fear, was hopeful of ultimately effecting their subversion, and of thus satiating his rancorous hatred of Christianity, by seeing buried under the same ruins, the doctrines, the rites, and the government of the Church. In opposition, therefore, to an author, the popularity of whose style throws a lustre around his name, which creates a dangerous bias in favour of every bold assertion and every uncandid insinuation, it is my wish to vindicate the form, as well as the principle, of our establishment; to shew that its necessity is demonstrable *a priori*, that it has been recognized in both the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations, and that it is actually framed on the model of the primitive Church.

Every institution, which is designed for general use, must be provided with means for the promulgation of its laws, and with authority to enforce them. A system of aerial speculation may serve well enough to interest the Academy or the Portico; but a series of truths however luminous, and a code of laws however salutary, when announced to the bulk of mankind in an unembodied form, can make but little progress towards reaching the human heart, and
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^a Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. 2. ch. XV. p. 330—337 and 351—353 Ed. 8vo.



can operate with but feeble influence on human conduct. Whatever be the origin and whatever the designation of any system, if it is meant to be diffused and perpetuated, means must be devised and precautions adopted for giving it security and permanence;—such provisions of wisdom must be incorporated with it, as will enable it to withstand the rude shocks of violence, the ravages of time, and all those various contingencies, to which every thing connected with humanity is exposed: it must be invested with power which may shield it from insult, and invigorated with resources which may preserve it from decay.

It is the same with revelation;—without an uninterrupted series of miracles (and the very idea cannot be expressed in language which does not convey absurdity and contradiction) but without a perpetual suspension or an inversion of the order of nature, a revelation can only be perpetuated by the blessing of God on *human* means. And here, let it not be argued, as it has sometimes been, that it is insulting the majesty of God to associate divine and human laws, and superadd to his Almighty fiat the impotent command of man. For consistency's sake, let it be added that it is degrading to have created a being compounded of such heterogeneous materials as spirit and matter, and to have imprisoned the immortal soul in a mouldering tabernacle of clay! The fact is, that every part of the divine dispensations must be considered with reference to our wants and weaknesses, and as accommodated to the infirmities of a *fallen* being; and when we contemplate revelation thus

connected with such a being, we can not expect it to be communicated as a bare enunciation of the divine will, or in the naked simplicity of a command:—Angels and superior orders of intelligence may listen and obey;—but man, the sport of passion and the victim of appetite, beset with such a multiplicity of temptations and encircled with such a host of crimes; man, who in the sallies of some eccentric moment rejects truths the most obvious, and amidst the ebullitions of some impetuous passion renounces principles the most virtuous;—such a being requires some visible instrument, some present monitor, who under the favour of Providence may inculcate the doctrines, may enforce the precepts, may protect the ordinances of God.

From a view, therefore, of the nature of man and the settled constitution of things we conclude, that where a system of doctrines and rites is revealed which is to endure till the final consummation of all things and to be bounded only by the limits of the world, provision must be made for its permanence and universality (not by any act of omnipotence which would vacate the responsibility and annihilate the agency of man, but) by securing, through human instrumentality, a regular succession of ministers qualified for the vindication of its fundamental truths, for the exposition of its precepts and the administration of its rites.

But it is not merely general provisions which reason anticipates;—from a contemplation of the character of man and the sanctity of this high commission, reason infers, that

that they who engage in an occupation thus holy, should be dedicated to its exclusive service, in order that they may have more leisure for scriptural research and greater security against the pollutions of the world. Reason infers, that, as we none of us can trust the partiality of our own judgment and are not all competent to estimate the fitness of others, in order to prevent the intrusion of ignorance and the contamination of vice, power to confer the ministerial office must be vested in those whose approved talents will enable them to discriminate, and whose elevated situation will stamp their appointment with authority. Reason infers, from the opposition of contradictory opinions and the conflict of rival interests, that amongst the several members, thus multiplied, there must be such a distribution of power, as is suited to their respective duties, and proportioned to their different ranks; and whilst, in order to command reverence and insure tranquillity to the whole it thus rises in a graduated scale, it must terminate in that authority which is to exercise supreme control; and which, as it is to preside over so wide a sphere, that it may be the better prepared to animate as well as to awe to duty, must be endowed with the incitements of remuneration, as well as armed with the terrors of power. Such are the legitimate conclusions which reason draws, whilst previously speculating on the provisions necessary for promulgating a revelation, and on the means of giving those provisions the regularity of order and the uniformity of system.

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In the institutes of the Mosaic code and in the regulations of the Levitical priesthood, we not only find a recognition of this general principle, but the very modifications of it to which we have alluded, hallowed sometimes by the positive command, and sometimes by the subsequent sanction of God. "Moses,"^b we are told in the book of Exodus, "chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." And lest we should suppose that such gradations were confined to the forms of civil government, we read too, that the Almighty ordered *Moses*,^c "to put upon Aaron and his sons, the holy garment, and to anoint them and sanctify them to minister in the Priest's office;" and again, "that their anointing was to be an^d *everlasting* priesthood throughout their generations." We further find that "the Levites were to be *presented before Aaron* that they might minister to him," and that his authority was to regulate the services of their tribe. So that the *subordination* of the Jewish priesthood is as evident as their divine appointment; and I will take leave of the consideration of the
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^b Exod. c. XVIII. v. 25.

^c Levit. c. VIII. v. 1—13. Exod. c. XXVIII. v. 1—4 and c. XXIX. v. 1—9 and c. XL. v. 13—15.

^d Exod. c. XL. v. 15 and Numbers, c. XXV. v. 13.

^e Numbers, c. III. v. 6 and c. XVIII. v. 2—7.

more^f minute details of their sacerdotal arrangements with observing, that the distinguishing appellations of g “High Priest” and “Chief Priests” imply, in those to whom they are assigned, more exalted rank as well as more dignified functions.

If, then, the Jewish œconomy, so remarkable for the frequent presence and the constant superintendence of God as to be emphatically denominated a theocracy, was yet conducted by the intermediate agency of men, consecrated to different offices and placed in different stations in such a manner as to give coherence and harmony to the whole; we can not but expect, that a similar system would be adopted in the Christian dispensation, which (as, from its being designed to extend over a wider range and to endure to a more protracted period, it would require for the ministerial duty augmented numbers) would also require greater severity of discipline and greater energy of control. Accordingly, the instructions with which our Lord concluded his visible ministry on earth,^h “Go ye into all “the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” do not announce the object to be effected with more clearness than they suggest the means of effecting it. For, as no one will be wild enough to ingraft on the words the incongruous

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^f Numbers, c. IV.

^g Numbers, c. III. v. 32 and c. IV. v. 27.

^h Mark, c. XVI. v. 15.

ous interpretation, which would exact from the personal exertions of the apostles the accomplishment of a design which pervades all time and includes every human being, it is of necessity implied, that the execution of this comprehensive scheme was to be completed by the co-operation of teachers whom the apostles should delegate,ⁱ and by the aggregate labours of those whom in every age the successors of the apostles should invest with that high commission.^k In conformity with this, whilst we are told that Paul and Barnabas, who had themselves been separated^l for the ministry with prayer and imposition of hands, ordained elders in every church,^m we find St. Paul, in one instance, admonishing Timothyⁿ to vindicate "the honour due to the elders," and to "lay hands suddenly on no man;" and in another, declaring that he^o left Titus in Crete, that he might "set in order the things that were wanting, and *ordain elders* in every city, as *he* had appointed him." From the introduction of his epistle to the Philippians

ⁱ The Acts of the Apostles, c. VI. v. 6.

^k ——— "habemus annumerare eos qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt
" Episcopi in ecclesiis, et successores eorum usque ad nos."——

Irenæ. lib. 3. cap. 3. Ed. Grabe.

^l Acts, c. XIII. v. 3.

^m Acts, c. XIV. v. 23.

ⁿ 1 Tim. c. V. v. 17 and 22.

^o Titus, c. I. v. 5.

lippians it appears, that the pastoral authority thus exercised was not of^p equal and co-ordinate rank, but modified into those very forms which still subsist; "Paul and Timothy, the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the^q *bishops* and *deacons*." I forbear to accumulate proofs familiar to clerical ears, and will only add a very remarkable passage of Ignatius, in which he minutely distinguishes three orders of ecclesiastics; ^r — "the bishop," says he, "presiding in the place of God, προκαθήμενος τῷ ἐπισκοπῷ εἰς τοπον θεῷ, and the elders in the place of the council of apostles, and the deacons, being intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ."

This epistle, I am aware, is one which sometimes appears disfigured with interpolations; but even if the sagacity of criticism should taint this passage with suspicion, our proof will not be invalidated; as we can appeal with confidence, not to one solitary sentence or to a few detached words, but to the whole of the^s succeeding chapter, and to some portion or other of almost every epistle which bears the name of Ignatius. C The

p — "ostenditur tota antiquitas sensisse Titum et Timotheum a Paulo ordinatos hoc peculiari modo Episcopos cum *superioritate* in alios pastores; Polycar- cum quoque et *alios* ordinatos ab Apostolis: et *hos Episcopos*, qui in singulis civitatibus erant duntaxat *singuli*, non *quosvis* pastores, in Apocalypsi Angelos vocari." *Bon. Fid. Sib. Lubbert. Grotii. oper. tom. 3. p. 135.*

q Philip. c. 1. v. 1.

r Ignat. epist. ad Magnes. cap. 6. p. 18. tom. 2. Pat. Apost. Ed. Cot.

s Ωςπερ ὃν ὁ κύριος ἀνευ τῶ πατρὸς ἡδὲν ποιεῖ—ὅτω καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀνευ τῶ ἐπισκοπῶ, μηδὲ πρεσβύτερος, μηδὲ διακονος, μηδὲ λαϊκος. κ.τ.λ. cap. 7. ut

The testimony, therefore, of one who was the ^t disciple of St. John, who was appointed bishop of Antioch by the apostles ^u themselves, who survived the last of them and suffered martyrdom about the 109th year of the Christian era, must be allowed to be decisive of the practice of the primitive Church during the *first* century; and by the liberality of a ^x concession, hardly to have been expected from one so hostile to Christianity, we are released from the necessity of investigating the opinions and usage of succeeding ages; for the writer, to whom I have alluded, acknowledges that after the first century, the existing mode of Church government had the sanction of antiquity. I trust it appears that it has a much higher sanction; and therefore to his bitter invective and his gorgeous declamation against the splendor of the hierarchy I would in a word reply, that as far as it is meant to attach to the Church of England it is false,^y except in those instances in which it is indispensably

supra. Vide quoque "epist. ad Trallian." cap. 2. 3. et 7. "epist. ad Philadelph." cap. 7. 8. et 9. "epist. ad Smyrn." cap. 8. et 9. et "epist. ad Polycarp." cap. 6.

^t Martyr. S. Mart. Ignat. Theoph. cap. 2. p. 161. tom. 2. Pat. Apost. Ed. Cot.

^u "Ignatium Antiochiæ ab apostolis electione constitutum dicit Chrysostomus." Rivet. *apolog. discuss.* Grotii. oper. tom. 3. p. 695.

^x Gibbon, vol. 2. p. 332, and note 112. Ed. 8vo.

^y "The simple hereupon, lacking judgment and knowledge to discern between the nature of things which changeth not, and those outward and variable accidents, are made believe that a Bishop heretofore and now are things in their very nature so distinct that they cannot be judged the same. Yet to men that have any part of skill, what more evident and plain in Bishops, than

indispensably necessary to annex the external appendages of power in order to preserve the principle of the original institution. Versed as he was in human nature, no one knew better than himself, that amongst a people flourishing amidst the discoveries of inventive genius, enriched with the pursuits of commerce and advanced to the summit of social refinement, the poverty of a primitive pastor, or even the interesting simplicity of patriarchal manners would be ill calculated to give efficacy to exhortation and effect to authority. But all superfluous ornament and all unnecessary power we disclaim, anxious only to preserve what was originally ordained for the purpose of preventing innovation on our doctrines and infringement on our discipline.

If, then, our institution, thus modelled, can boast of a divine origin and of apostolical adoption; if it be "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,"^z away with that morbid liberality of mind, too flimsy a veil to

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hide

"than that augmentation or diminution in their precincts, allowances, privileges, and such like, do make a difference indeed, but no essential difference between one Bishop and another? As for those things in regard whereof we use properly to term them Bishops, those things whereby they essentially differ from other Pastors; those things which the natural definition of a Bishop must contain, what one of them is there more or less applicable unto Bishops now than of old?"

Hooker's Eccles. Polity, Book 7th, p. 374. Ed. 1670.

^z Ephes. c. 11. v. 20.

hide the indifference which lurks beneath it, which can tamely behold the machinations of those who would undermine this sacred edifice. The conscientious dissenter on principle, him who becomes such on the result of what he deems, however erroneously, impartial investigation; or even those whose dissent is supported by no fairer reason than the force of habit or the prejudice of education, far be it from me to arraign! Sacred for ever be the real rights of conscience, and for ever undiminished the prerogative of private judgment! Let toleration be extended to the utmost verge of prudence and be limited by no restrictions which are not essential to the security of the national church! But yet, for that venal band of apostates from our establishment, who, forgetting the solemn pledge^a which at their ordination they gave to God and man, can find a recompence for their desertion in the petty acclamations with which their misguided conventicle may hail them, or can basely compromise with their conscience for the sordid emoluments which they can extort from deluded ignorance, for them as it is impossible to feel, it were a profanation

^a The Bishop at the Holy Table asks the Candidate, "Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief ministers unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments?"

Answer. "I will do so, the Lord being my helper."

See, "The form and manner of the ordering of Deacons and Priests," in the Common Prayer Book.

See too, The 36th of the Articles of the Church of England.

nation of this holy place to express, indulgence. May they be reclaimed from the error of their ways, and be made one fold under one shepherd! and may we, my brethren, be confirmed in the principles of our faith, by looking, and looking to imitate, up to that vigilance in the discharge of duty, which is exemplified in the exercise of that authority, in obedience to which we are here assembled under circumstances of peculiar anxiety.

The singular dangers which threaten the Church of Christ are doubtless intended for the exercise of our talents and the probation of our faith. If a great portion of what once was Christendom has recorded its renunciation of a Redeemer and a God, if not an outwork merely, only remotely connected, but the citadel of our faith itself is invested, we are called upon to expand our faculties and to exhaust our powers till we display energy equal to the portentous crisis, and thus in contradistinction to others record what can never be forgotten even here, and if it were, will yet be remembered to our immortal glory hereafter, that in a moment of general convulsion and general dereliction of principle, the sons of our establishment were true to their duty and consistent in their profession. *Qui sibi hoc sumfit, ut corrigat mores aliorum ac peccata reprehendat, quis huic ignoscat, si qua in re ipse ab religione officii declinavit?*^b is the question of the Roman orator; but it is the Christian minister that must give the answer; and never was it more necessary that that answer should be written
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^b Cicer. in Verrem lib. 3. sub init.

in characters of virtue legible by every beholder! Atheism has been permitted to enthrone itself in power, and thence to scatter its pestilential mildew over the fair fruits which religion would produce, blasting with locust desolation every social virtue and every christian grace; carrying consternation into the retreat of piety and dismay into the bosom of faith; shaking to its centre the whole moral system and disjoining the very frame of civilized society,

————— “*totaque discors*
“*Machina divulgæ turbabit fœdera mundi.*”^c

To crush this monstrous prodigy of vice and falsehood, fertile in mischief and inveterate in hostility as the gates of Hell itself, may the grace of God direct us to apply our most strenuous confederate exertions! No exertions can be so serviceable as the display of those virtues which are the surest tests of our sincerity, and the brightest ornaments of our profession. Upon these we cannot doubt the favour of approving Heaven! Before this, they have been permitted to enable our establishment to encounter vicissitudes equally disastrous, and to ride in safety through storms of equal violence! They enabled it in its very infancy to resist persecution leagued with power; and at a later, but not less glorious period, to emancipate itself from the thralldom of superstitious ceremonies, and to reject the sullen independence and the republican rigours of Calvin! The exertions, which were then crowned with success, will equally avert all danger now; the same energetic efforts of reason controlled

^c Lucan. Pharsal, lib. I. ver. 79.

controlled by faith and learning directed by piety will not only secure the present triumph of religion over philosophy embattled and infidelity in arms, but will elevate us to be the humble instruments, in the hands of Providence, of transmitting to future ages this venerable structure of Christianity, not for ignorance to admire or prejudice to praise, but for experience to sanction and gratitude to applaud,—not to be recalled with regret as the occasion of past gratulation or to be anticipated by hope as the source of future repose, but to be hailed by every succeeding generation as the object of present and palpable enjoyment, the depository of the faith and the guardian of the unity of the church, skilfully constructed, like the ark of old, to survive the general deluge of impiety, and amply competent, amidst the wreck of so many institutions, for ever to prevent heresy from contaminating our doctrines and schism from disturbing our tranquillity!

THE END.



Published by the same Author,

**I. THE ETERNAL FILIATION OF THE SON OF GOD
ASSERTED,**

On the EVIDENCE of the SACRED SCRIPTURES,
The Consent of the FATHERS of the Three First Centuries,
And the Authority of the NICENE COUNCIL.

II. A SERMON,

PREACHED AT ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, LIVERPOOL,

MARCH THE EIGHTH, 1797,

Being the Day appointed for a General Fast.

